

# The Gospel of John

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*John 5:1-11:54*

## **Additional Signs amid Mounting Unbelief (5:1-10:42)**

Jesus continues to manifest signs which reveal his nature and provide occasions to teach and explain his purpose and work in the world. The unbelief and skepticism of the Jews is countered with extended teaching in the form of discourses on the nature and work of the Messiah. In the same way, the more positive seeking and clamoring of the crowds becomes an occasion to teach about the call of the disciple and character of true belief.

### ***The Father and the Son are Equal: The Healing of a Lame Man (5)***

John explains that the pool in Bethesda was a place where many invalids--blind, lame and paralyzed gathered. The belief was that an angel of the Lord would come and stir the waters of the pool and if a sick person entered the waters in moment when stirred, they would be healed. Jesus identifies a man who "wants to be healed" but his own disability prevents him from ever making it to the pool's water in time. In a display of his power and glory, Jesus bypasses the pool all together and simply tells the man to "pick up his mat and walk".(5:8) Miraculously, he does!

The sign becomes an occasion for Jewish objection on account of the healing being done on the Sabbath. Jesus overcomes the objection with: "My father is working until now, and I am working." (5:17) This answer sets the stage for the more significant Jewish objection: Jesus was "calling God his own father making himself equal to God." (5:18) Their two objections led to condemnation--they were persecuting Jesus (16) and seeking to kill him (18). The objection provides the occasion for an extended discourse on Jesus' relationship to God the Father. Amazingly, Jesus does not contradict their conclusion, but rather affirms their conclusions, and provides reasons to validate them!

Jesus first identifies himself as "doing" the same work as God the Father. The two "works" that he highlights are giving life and raising the dead to life and executing judgment. Jesus teaches that both works have been delegated to the son by the father. So the imperative is on "hearing the voice of the Son of God."(25)

*Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. --John 5:28-29*

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Hearing the voice of the Son--leads to eternal life.

Jesus then gives three "testimonies" that validate the assertion of equality between the Father and Son. The first testimony is that of John the Baptist, a testimony which was generally welcomed. (5:33-35) An even greater testimony is the "works" that Jesus is doing. They are demonstrations of the Father's power working through the Son. This is the Father's testimony. The third witness is the Holy Scripture,

particularly Moses. As with John the Baptist and God the Father, the Jews accept and delight in these authorities, and yet are not listening to them with regards to the Son, and therefore they do not accept the voice of the Son.

### ***The Bread of Life (6)***

The miraculous feeding of the multitude also provides an occasion for an extended teaching; this time on the blessing and challenge of believing in Jesus for those who do receive him. Certainly the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes was an occasion which engendered belief and hope in Jesus:

*When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. --John 6:14-15*

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While the crowds exalted Jesus and sought to "make him king", they misperceived the nature of his kingdom to be about earthly rule and earthy provision. Jesus confronts this misperception:

*Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal. --John 6:26-27*

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His offer to the crowds was of a spiritual nature. The bread that he had to offer was not bread to temporarily fill the stomach but eternally fill the soul. The questions the crowd asked him is correct. "What must we do to be doing the works of God?"(6:28) The answer from Jesus is simple: "This is the work of God, that you believe on the one whom he has sent."(6:29)

Jesus is the "bread of God" come down out of heaven that gives life. Echoing the Samaritan woman's request, they respond, "Sir, give us this bread!" This request then expands into an extended discourse on the first of seven "I am" statements in the Gospel.

The Hebrew, proper name for God, "YHWH" is translated as "I am". The seven discourses expand on the incarnation theme from the prologue, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (1:14)

*Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life!" --John 6:35*

Jesus sign points to an eternal reality. His flesh and blood are the very life of God. Whoever feeds on this bread will not die, but live. In the disciple's wrestling over this "hard saying", Jesus explains that true belief in Jesus is a gift from God and a work of his spirit in the human heart. (John 6:35, cf. 6:42) God the Father knows and draws his people into true, spirit-filled, life giving relationship with the Son. There are others who do not believe and take offence. The steadfastness of the twelve is evidence of the divine election unto life by Jesus. (6:70)

*"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God." --John 6:68*

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### **Jesus at the Feast of the Tabernacle (7:1-10:21)**

In Chapters 7 and 8, the Gospel setting changes from Galilee to Jerusalem and the Festival of the Booths. As the last festival of the Jewish year, this festival not only look back towards the gracious provision of YHWH in the wilderness during the 40 years, it also became a festival of eschatological or future hopes for restoration.

#### **Feast of Booths(7)**

The first interaction concerning the feast is whether Jesus would even attend. His brother's urged him to use the festival to make a public display of his signs. "Show yourself to the world!", they urged. Jesus will not be controlled by his brothers (like his mother). There is a divine timing to his unveiling.

While he differentiated himself from the will of his brothers, he nevertheless went to the feast in private. The opinions concerning Jesus were already being formed in the minds of the people. "He is a good man" and "he is leading the people astray" (7:12) provide a range of popular opinion about Jesus. Jesus begins to teach in the temple.

The Jewish teachers used the authority of others to build their own cases. Jesus claimed God the Father as his authority. "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me." (7:16) The opposition to Jesus on the part of the Jews was building as they continued to seek to arrest him. (7:30)

#### **Living Water (7:37-39)**

On the final day of the temple festivities, the high priest would pour water at the base of the altar in order to symbolically anticipate the flowing of living water from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea as prophesied in Ezekiel 47. Jesus stands up on this celebrated day and proclaims that he is the source of the living water through the outpouring of the Spirit. Earlier in the gospel, we learned that Jesus body would be raised as the New Temple. (2:19-22; cf. 4:7-14) Everything that the Scriptures and the feasts bear witness to Jesus.

The responses to this teaching were mixed. Some believed, others doubted based on prevailing interpretations of the prophesies of the Messiah.

The story of the woman caught in adultery is reveals the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus demonstrates everyone's need for grace, while at the same time encouraging a holy life.

#### **I am the Light: Truth and Lies, Slavery and Freedom (8)**

The second "I am" statement is "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (8:12) In the exchanges which follow, we see the Jews clamoring for some reason to invalidate Jesus claims. Their objections continue to be addressed, nevertheless they persist in unbelief.

Jesus challenges them to walk in the light by which he means "the truth":

*So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

*<sup>33</sup> They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"*

*<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. <sup>35</sup> The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. <sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. --John 8:32-35*

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Light and darkness are metaphors for truth and lies. Jesus confronts the Jews in their falsehood. How can they say they are free, if they do not believe in the son who gives freedom. How can they say they are Abraham's children, if they are following their father the devil. Jesus speaks of a spiritual slavery so sin; he offers freedom to those who will walk in the light. The Jews are in slavery, in the dark, in sin, following lies.

The focus becomes Jesus' claims about his relationship with Abraham. The Jews rightly perceive the implications from his teaching that he is greater than Abraham (8:53) and that he personally knew Abraham. The statement in John 8:58 is a clear self-revelation that Jesus is YHWH (the "I Am"). The Jews knew he was claiming to be God and picked up stones to stone him for blasphemy.

Though Jesus is the light of the world, the darkness, lies and sin have blinded many of this age.

### *Jesus Heals a Blind Man (9)*

The sign of the healing of the man born blind is not only a way for the Gospel to demonstrate the power of Jesus, but really to ask, "Who is truly blind when it comes to believing in Jesus?" The healing of the man born blind becomes the occasion to highlight the blindness of the Pharisees. In their interrogations of the man and his parents, they look the fool for their unbelief. Yet, they persist.

*We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." <sup>30</sup> The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. --John 9:28-31*

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This issue clearly is that the current shepherds of Israel are illegitimate. The chief Shepherd has arrived and found them wanting. Jesus, in his third and fourth "I am" statement announces: "I am the door of the sheep" (9:7) and "I am the good shepherd" (9:11). This "I am" discourse serves as a commentary on the Jewish leadership. They are called "strangers", "thieves", "robbers" and "hired hands".

They do not know the sheep. They do not love the sheep. The sheep do not recognize their voice. Jesus compares their agenda to his:

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. --John 10:10*

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Clearly, as John is telling the story of Jesus and his teachings, he is encouraging his reader to be discerning with regard to the spiritual authorities in their lives. Jesus has their best interests at heart. He proves this because "he lays down his life for his sheep". (10:15)

## **The Climactic Sign--The raising of Lazarus (11:1-11:54)**

The stage is set for a climactic revelation of Jesus glory through the resurrection of a dead man. The disciples are very much aware that a return trip to Judea could result in Jesus persecution and death by stoning. Jesus persists in his determination to return to Bethany in Judea because "Lazarus has died". Jesus hints at some great sign he will perform "that you may believe." Thomas has his doubts as girds up to go and die with Lazarus (and Jesus).(11:16)

The miraculous raising of Lazarus from being dead three days becomes not only a demonstration of Jesus divinity but also his humanity. "Jesus wept." (11:35) is both the shortest verse in the Bible and perhaps the most profound. Jesus is described as being "deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled." Not only is Jesus acquainted with human sorrows and grief, he shares in them.

He also is the one who can reverse them. In a display of the "glory of God" (11:40), Jesus calls a three day dead Lazarus to "come out!".(11:43)

The fifth "I am" statement :

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26*

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Jesus is God in the flesh. He holds the power of life and death in his sovereign hands. He is the bread. He is light. He is the source of living water. He is the gate. He is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. He is the great "I am."

The people who hear these claims in the Gospel understand his claims loud and clear. He is not merely a good man. Some say he has a demon, some call him a fiend and blasphemer, others called him Messiah.

CS Lewis said it best when he wrote:

*"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell.*

*You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.*

*... Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God."--CS Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 55.*

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John is writing this Gospel for his reader to see the glory of the one and only Son of God. And, through seeing and listening to him--come to believe.

*He has been shown to you, you have heard his teachings.*

*Do you believe?*